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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE THIRD DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Commission on Human Rights the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003), which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/91 of 12 December 1993.

The Secretary-General would like to draw the attention of the members of the Commission to paragraphs 25 (a) and (c) of the Programme of Action, which refer to specific action to be undertaken by the Commission in connection with the implementation of the activities of the Decade.

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Programme of action for the third decade to combat racism and racial discrimination (1993-2003)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The goals and objectives of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination are those adopted by the General Assembly for the first Decade and contained in paragraph 8 of the annex to its resolution 3057 (XXVIII) of 2 November 1973:

> "The ultimate goals of the Decade are to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind on grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, especially by eradicating racial prejudice, racism and racial discrimination; to arrest any expansion of racist policies, to eliminate the persistence of racist policies and to counteract the emergence of alliances based on mutual espousal of racism and racial discrimination; to resist any policy and practices which lead to the strengthening of the racist regimes and contribute to the sustainment of racism and racial discrimination; to identify, isolate and dispel the fallacious and mythical beliefs, policies and practices that contribute to racism and racial discrimination; and to put an end to racist regimes."

2. In drawing up suggested elements for the Programme of Action for the Third Decade, account has been taken of the fact that current global economic conditions have caused many Member States to call for budgetary restraint, which in turn requires a conservative approach to the number and type of programmes of action that may be considered at this time. The Secretary-General also took into account the relevant suggestions made by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its forty-first session. The elements presented below have been suggested as those which are essential, should resources be made available to implement them.

II. MEASURES TO ENSURE A PEACEFUL TRANSITION FROM APARTHEID TO A DEMOCRATIC, NON-RACIAL REGIME IN SOUTH AFRICA

3. Recently, there have been signs of change in South Africa, notably the abolition of such legal pillars of apartheid as the Group Areas Act, the Land Areas Act and the Population Registration Act. Although there is reason to be hopeful that South Africa is moving into the mainstream of the international community, the transition period may prove to be difficult and dangerous. Fierce political competition between political parties and ethnic groups has in fact already led to bloodshed.

4. The General Assembly and the Security Council should therefore continue to exercise constant vigilance with regard to South Africa until a democratic regime is installed in that country. These two bodies might, moreover, consider initiating a mechanism to advise and assist the parties concerned in order to bring apartheid to an end, not only in law but also in fact. Reference should be made to Security Council resolution 765 (1992) of 16 July 1992 urging the South African authorities to bring an effective end to the violence and bring those responsible to justice.

5. The General Assembly will continue to examine the relevant work undertaken by the established United Nations bodies in the fight against apartheid, that is, the Special Committee against Apartheid, the Group of Three and the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on Southern Africa.

III. MEASURES TO REMEDY THE LEGACY OF CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DISPARITIES LEFT BY APARTHEID

6. Action will be needed to rectify the consequences of apartheid in southern Africa, since the policy of apartheid has entailed the use of state power to increase inequalities between racial groups. The knowledge and experience of human rights bodies dealing with racial discrimination could be most useful in promoting equality. Assistance to the victims of the political antagonisms resulting from the process of dismantling apartheid must also be given the greatest attention, and international solidarity on their behalf should be intensified.

7. The Centre for Human Rights should offer technical assistance in the field of human rights to South Africa during and after the transition period. A cycle of seminars intended to encourage the advent of an egalitarian society should be envisaged, in cooperation with the concerned specialized agencies and units of the United Nations Secretariat, which could include the following:

(a) Seminar on measures to be taken on behalf of the disadvantaged groups in South African society in the cultural, economic and social fields ("positive discrimination");

(b) Seminar on the effects of racial discrimination on the health of members of disadvantaged groups;

(c) Training courses in human rights for the South African police force, military and judiciary.

8. In addition, in cooperation with the democratically elected Government of South Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization might undertake a project for the total revision of the South African educational system in order to eliminate all methods and references of a racist character.

IV. ACTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

9. During the discussion at the substantive session of 1992 of the Economic and Social Council concerning the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, many delegations expressed their concern with regard to new expressions of racism, racial discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia in various parts of the world. In particular, these affect minorities, ethnic groups, migrant workers, indigenous populations, nomads, immigrants and refugees.

10. The biggest contribution to the elimination of racial discrimination will be that which results from the actions of States within their own territories. International action undertaken as part of any programme for the Third Decade

should therefore be directed so as to assist States to act effectively. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination has established standards for States, and every opportunity should be seized to ensure that these are universally accepted and applied.

11. The General Assembly should consider more effective action to ensure that all States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination fulfil their reporting and financial obligations. National action against racism and racial discrimination should be monitored and improved by requesting an expert member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to prepare a report on obstacles encountered with respect to the effective implementation of the Convention by States parties and suggestions for remedial measures.

12. The General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to organize regional workshops and seminars. A team from the Committee should be invited to monitor these meetings. The following themes are suggested for the seminars:

(a) Seminar to assess the experience gained in the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The seminar would also assess the efficiency of national legislation and recourse procedures available to victims of racism;

(b) Seminar on the eradication of incitement to racial hatred and discrimination, including the prohibition of propaganda activities and of organizations involved in them;

(c) Seminar on the right to equal treatment before tribunals and other judicial institutions, including the provision of reparation for damages suffered as a result of discrimination;

(d) Seminar on the transmission of racial inequality from one generation to another, with special reference to the children of migrant workers and the appearance of new forms of segregation;

(e) Seminar on immigration and racism;

(f) Seminar on international cooperation in the elimination of racial discrimination, including cooperation between States, the contribution of non-governmental organizations, national and regional institutions, United Nations bodies and petitions to treaty-monitoring bodies;

(g) Seminar on the enactment of national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination affecting ethnic groups, migrant workers and refugees (in Europe and North America);

(h) Seminar on flows of refugees resulting from ethnic conflicts or political restructuring of multi-ethnic societies in socio-economic transition (Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia) and their link with racism in the host country;

(i) Training course on national legislation prohibiting racial discrimination for nationals from countries within and without such legislation;

(j) Regional seminars on nationalism, ethno-nationalism and human rights could also provide an opportunity for broadening knowledge of the causes of today's ethnic conflicts and particularly of the so-called policy of "ethnic cleansing", in order to provide solutions.

13. The General Assembly requests the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat to undertake specific activities that could be carried out by Governments and relevant national non-governmental organizations to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March each year. Support should be sought from artists, as well as religious leaders, trade unions, enterprises and political parties, to sensitize the population on the evils of racism and racial discrimination.

14. The Department of Public Information should also publish its posters for the Third Decade and informative brochures on the activities planned for the Decade. Documentary films and reports, as well as radio broadcasts on the damaging effects of racism and racial discrimination, should, moreover, be considered.

15. In cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Department of Public Information, the General Assembly supports the organization of a seminar on the role of mass media in combating or disseminating racist ideas.

16. In cooperation with the International Labour Organisation, the possibility of organizing a seminar on the role of trade unions in combating racism and racial discrimination in employment should be explored.

17. The General Assembly invites the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to expedite the preparation of teaching materials and teaching aids to promote teaching, training and educational activities against racism and racial discrimination, with particular emphasis on activities at the primary and secondary levels of education.

18. The General Assembly calls upon Member States to make special efforts:

(a) To promote the aim of non-discrimination in all educational programmes and policies;

(b) To give special attention to the civic education of teachers. It is essential that teachers be aware of the principles and essential content of the legal texts relevant to racism and racial discrimination and of how to deal with the problem of relations between children belonging to different communities;

(c) To teach contemporary history at an early age, presenting children with an accurate picture of the crimes committed by fascist and other totalitarian regimes, and more particularly of the crimes of apartheid and genocide;

(d) To ensure that curricula and textbooks reflect anti-racist principles and promote intercultural education.

V. ACTION AT THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

19. The following questions are addressed in the context of action to be undertaken at the national and regional levels: have there been any successful national models to eliminate racism and racial prejudices that could be recommended to States, for example, for educating children, or principles of equality to tackle racism against migrant workers, ethnic minorities or indigenous peoples? What kind of affirmative action programmes are there at the national or regional level to redress discrimination against specific groups?

20. The General Assembly recommends that States that have not yet done so adopt, ratify and implement legislation prohibiting racism and racial discrimination, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

21. The General Assembly recommends that Member States review their national programmes to combat racial discrimination and its effects in order to identify and to seize opportunities to close gaps between different groups, and especially to undertake housing, educational and employment programmes that have proved to be successful in combating racial discrimination and xenophobia.

22. The General Assembly recommends that Members States encourage the participation of journalists and human rights advocates from minority groups and communities in the mass media. Radio and television programmes should increase the number of broadcasts produced by and in cooperation with racial and cultural minority groups. Multicultural activities of the media should also be encouraged where they can contribute to the suppression of racism and xenophobia.

23. The General Assembly recommends that regional organizations cooperate closely with United Nations efforts in combating racism and racial discrimination. Regional organizations dealing with human rights issues could mobilize public opinion in their regions against the evils of racism and racial prejudices directed towards disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups. These institutions could serve an important function in assisting Governments to enact national legislation against racial discrimination and promote adoption and application of international conventions. Regional human rights commissions should be called upon to publicize widely basic texts on existing human rights instruments.

VI. BASIC RESEARCH AND STUDIES

24. The long-term viability of the United Natons programme against racism and racial discrimination will depend in part on continuing research into the causes of racism and into the new manifestations of racism and racial discrimination. The General Assembly may wish to examine the importance of preparing studies on racism. The following are some aspects to be studied:

(a) Study of the application of article 2 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Such a study might assist States to learn from one another the national measures undertaken to implement the Convention;

(b) Study of the economic factors contributing to perpetuation of racism and racial discrimination;

(c) Integration or preservation of cultural identity in a multiracial or multi-ethnic society;

(d) Study of political rights, including the participation of various racial groups in political processes and their representation in government service;

(e) Study of civil rights, including migration, nationality and freedom of opinion and association;

(f) Study of educational measures to combat racial prejudice and discrimination and to propagate the principles of the United Nations;

(g) Studies of the socio-economic costs of racism and racial discrimination;

(h) Global integration and the question of racism and the nation State;

(i) National mechanisms against racism and racial discrimination in the fields of immigration, employment, salary, housing, education and ownership of property.

VII. COORDINATION AND REPORTING

25. It may be relevant to recall that in its resolution 38/14 of 22 November 1983, in which it proclaimed the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the General Assembly charged the Economic and Social Council with coordinating the implementation of the programme and evaluating the activities. The Assembly decides that the following steps should be taken to strengthen the United Nations input into the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination:

(a) The General Assembly entrusts the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights, in cooperation with the Secretary-General, with the responsibility for coordinating the programmes and evaluating the activities undertaken in connection with the Third Decade;

(b) The Secretary-General is invited to provide specific information on activities against racism, to be contained in one annual report, which should be comprehensive in nature and allow a general overview of all mandated activities. This will facilitate coordination and evaluation;

(c) An open-ended working group of the Commission on Human Rights, or other appropriate arrangements under the Commission, may be established to review decade-related information on the basis of the annual reports referred to above, as well as relevant studies and reports of seminars, to assist the Commission in formulating appropriate recommendations to the Economic and Social Council on particular activities, allocation of priorities and so on.

26. Furthermore, an inter-agency meeting should be organized immediately after the proclamation of the Third Decade, in 1994, with a view to planning working meetings and other activities.

VIII. REGULAR SYSTEM-WIDE CONSULTATIONS

27. On an annual basis, consultations between the United Nations, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations should take place to review and plan decade-related activities. In this framework, the Centre for Human Rights should organize inter-agency meetings to consider and discuss further measures to strengthen the coordination and cooperation of programmes related to the issues of combating racism and racial discrimination.

28. The Centre for Human Rights should also strengthen the relationship with non-governmental organizations fighting against racism and racial discrimination by holding consultations and briefings with the non-governmental organizations. Such meetings could help them to initiate, develop and present proposals regarding the struggle against racism and racial discrimination.

29. The Secretary-General should include the activities to be carried out during the decade, as well as the related resource requirements, in the proposed programme budgets, which will be submitted biennially, during the decade, starting with the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995.